

Song Lyrics as Poetry with Dr. Mark Schenker:

Bob Dylan

Thursday, October 10, 2024

2pm

Main Library, Rotary Room

I Dreamed I Saw St. Augustine

by Bob Dylan

I dreamed I saw St. Augustine
Alive as you or me
Tearing through these quarters
In the utmost misery
With a blanket underneath his arm
And a coat of solid gold
Searching for the very souls
Whom already have been sold

"Arise, arise", he cried so loud
With a voice without restraint
"Come out, ye gifted kings and queens
And hear my sad complaint
No martyr is among ye now
Whom you can call your own
But go on your way accordingly
But know you're not alone"
I dreamed I saw St. Augustine
Alive with fiery breath

And I dreamed I was amongst the ones
That put him out to death
Oh, I awoke in anger
So alone and terrified
I put my fingers against the glass
And bowed my head and cried

All Along the Watchtower

by Bob Dylan

There must be some way out of here
Said the joker to the thief
There's too much confusion
I can't get no relief

Businessmen, they drink my wine
Plowmen dig my earth
None of them along the line
Know what any of it is worth

"No reason to get excited"
The thief, he kindly spoke
"There are many here among us
Who feel that life is but a joke"

"But you and I, we've been through that
And this is not our fate
So, let us not talk falsely now
The hour is getting late"

All along the watchtower
Princes kept the view
While all the women came and went
Barefoot servants, too

Outside, in the distance
A wildcat did growl
Two riders were approaching
The wind began to howl

Mr. Tambourine Man

by Bob Dylan

Hey, Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me
I'm not sleepy and there is no place I'm going to
Hey, Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me
In the jingle jangle mornin' I'll come followin' you

Though I know that evening's empire has returned into sand
Vanished from my hand
Left me blindly here to stand, but still not sleeping
My weariness amazes me, I'm branded on my feet
I have no one to meet
And the ancient empty street's too dead for dreaming

Hey, Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me
I'm not sleepy and there is no place I'm going to
Hey, Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me
In the jingle jangle mornin' I'll come followin' you

Take me on a trip upon your magic swirlin' ship
My senses have been stripped
My hands can't feel to grip
My toes too numb to step
Wait only for my boot heels to be wandering

I'm ready to go anywhere
I'm ready for to fade
Into my own parade
Cast your dancing spell my way
I promise to go under it

Hey, Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me
I'm not sleepy and there is no place I'm going to
Hey, Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me
In the jingle jangle mornin' I'll come followin' you

Though you might hear laughing, spinning
Swinging madly across the sun
It's not aimed at anyone
It's just escaping on the run
And but for the sky, there are no fences facing

And if you hear vague traces of skipping reels of rhyme
To your tambourine in time
It's just a ragged clown behind
I wouldn't pay it any mind
It's just a shadow you're seeing, that he's chasing

Hey, Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me
I'm not sleepy and there is no place I'm going to
Hey, Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me
In the jingle jangle mornin' I'll come followin' you

Then take me disappearing through the smoke rings of my mind

Mr. Tambourine Man (continued)

Down the foggy ruins of time
Far past the frozen leaves
The haunted, frightened trees
Out to the windy beach
Far from the twisted reach of crazy sorrow

Yes, to dance beneath the diamond sky
With one hand waving free
Silhouetted by the sea
Circled by the circus sands
With all memory and fate, driven deep beneath the waves
Let me forget about today until tomorrow

Hey, Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me
I'm not sleepy and there is no place I'm going to
Hey, Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me
In the jingle jangle mornin' I'll come followin' you

Love Minus Zero/No Limits

by Bob Dylan

My love she speaks like silence,
Without ideals or violence,
She doesn't have to say she's faithful,
Yet she's true, like ice, like fire.
People carry roses,
Make promises by the hours,
My love she laughs like the flowers,
Valentines can't buy her.

In the dime stores and bus stations,
People talk of situations,
Read books, repeat quotations,
Draw conclusions on the wall.
Some speak of the future,
My love she speaks softly,
She knows there's no success like failure
And that failure's no success at all.

The cloak and dagger dangles,
Madams light the candles.
In ceremonies of the horsemen,
Even the pawn must hold a grudge.
Statues made of match sticks,
Crumble into one another,
My love winks, she does not bother,
She knows too much to argue or to judge.

The bridge at midnight trembles,
The country doctor rambles,
Bankers' nieces seek perfection,

Expecting all the gifts that wise men bring.
The wind howls like a hammer,
The night blows cold and rainy,
My love she's like some raven
At my window with a broken wing.

Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues

By Bob Dylan

When you're lost in the rain in Juarez, and it's Easter time too
And your gravity fails, negativity don't pull you through
Don't put on any airs when you're down on Rue Morgue Avenue
They got some hungry women there, and they'll really make a mess
outta you

If you see Saint Annie, please tell her thanks a lot
I cannot move, my fingers they are all in a knot
I don't have the strength to get up and take another shot
And my best friend, the doctor, won't even tell me what it is I've got

Sweet Melinda, the peasants call her the goddess of gloom
She speaks good English, invites you up into her room
And you're so kind and careful not to go to her too soon
And she takes your voice and leaves you howling at the moon

Up on Housing Project Hill, it's either fortune or fame
You must pick one or the other, neither of them are what they claim
If you're lookin' to get silly, you better go back to from where you came
Because the cops don't need you, and man, they expect the same

All the authorities, they just stand around and boast
How they blackmailed the sergeant-at-arms into leaving his post
And picking up Angel, who just arrived from the coast
Who looked so fine at first, but left looking just like a ghost

I started out on Burgundy, but soon hit the harder stuff
Everybody said they're right behind me when the game got rough
But the joke was on me, there was nobody even to call my bluff
I'm going back to New York City, I do believe I've had enough

To Ramona

by Bob Dylan

Ramona, come closer
Shut softly your watery eyes
The pangs of your sadness
Will pass as your senses will rise
For the flowers of the city
Though breathlike, get deathlike sometimes
And there's no use in tryin'
To deal with the dyin'
Though I cannot explain that in lines

Your cracked country lips
I still wish to kiss
As to be under the strength of your skin
Your magnetic movements
Still capture the minutes I'm in
But it grieves my heart, love
To see you tryin' to be a part of
A world that just don't exist
It's all just a dream, babe
A vacuum, a scheme, babe
That sucks you into feelin' like this

I can see that your head
Has been twisted and fed
With worthless foam from the mouth
I can tell you are torn
Between stayin' and returnin'
Back to the South
You've been fooled into thinking
That the finishin' end is at hand

Yet there's no one to beat you
No one t' defeat you
'Cept the thoughts of yourself feeling bad

I've heard you say many times
That you're better than no one
And no one is better than you
If you really believe that
You know you have
Nothing to win and nothing to lose
From fixtures and forces and friends
Your sorrow does stem
That hype you and type you
Making you feel
That you gotta be exactly like them

I'd forever talk to you
But soon my words
Would turn into a meaningless ring
For deep in my heart
I know there is no help I can bring
Everything passes
Everything changes
Just do what you think you should do
And someday maybe
Who knows, baby
I'll come and be cryin' to you

Visions of Johanna

by Bob Dylan

Ain't it just like the night to play tricks
When you're trying to be so quiet?
We sit here stranded though we're all doing our best to deny it
And Louise holds a handful of rain tempting you to defy it

Lights flicker from the opposite loft
In this room the heat pipes just cough
The country music station plays soft
But there's nothing, really nothing to turn off

Just Louise and her lover, so entwined
And these visions of Johanna that conquer my mind

In the empty lot where the ladies play
Blind man's bluff with the key chain
And the all-night girls
They whisper of escapades out on the D-train
We can hear the night-watch man click his flashlight
Ask himself if it's him or them that's insane

Louise, she's alright, she's just near
She's delicate and seems like the mirror
But she just makes it all too concise and too clear
That Johanna's not here

The ghost of electricity howls in the bones of her face
Where these visions of Johanna have now taken my place

And now little boy lost, he takes himself so seriously
He brags of his misery, he likes to live dangerously
And when bringing her name up, he speaks of a farewell kiss to me
He's sure got a lot of gall to be so useless and all
Muttering small talk at the wall while I'm in the hall

Oh, how can I explain, it's so hard to get on?
And these visions of Johanna, they've kept me up past the dawn

Inside the museums infinity goes up on trial
Voices echo, "This is what salvation must be like after a while"
But Mona Lisa must have had the highway blues
You can tell by the way she smiles

See the primitive wallflower freeze
When the jelly-faced women all sneeze
Hear the one with the mustache say
"Jeez, I can't find my knees"

Both jewels and binoculars hang from the head of the mule
But these visions of Johanna, they make it all seem so cruel

The peddler now speaks to the countess
Who's pretending to care for him
Saying, "Name me someone that's not a parasite
And I'll go out and say a prayer for him"

Visions of Johanna (continued)

But like Louise always says, "You can't look at much, can you man as she herself prepares for him?"

And Madonna, she still has not showed

We see this empty cage now corrode

Where her cape of the stage once had flowed

The fiddler, he now steps to the road

He writes, "Everything's been returned which was owed"

On the back of the fish truck that loads while my conscience explodes

The harmonicas play the skeleton keys and the rain

And these visions of Johanna are now all that remain

Desolation Row

by Bob Dylan

They're selling postcards of the hanging
They're painting the passports brown
The beauty parlor is filled with sailors
The circus is in town
Here comes the blind commissioner
They've got him in a trance
One hand is tied to the tightrope walker
The other is in his pants
And the riot squad, they're restless
They need somewhere to go

As Lady and I look out tonight from Desolation Row

Cinderella, she seems so easy
"It takes one to know one," she smiles
And puts her hands in her back pocket
Bette Davis style
And in comes Romeo, he's moaning
"You belong to me, I believe"
And someone says, "You're in the wrong place, my friend
You'd better leave"
And the only sound that's left
After the ambulances go

Is Cinderella sweeping up on Desolation Row

Now, the moon is almost hidden
The stars are beginning to hide

The fortune telling lady
Has even taken all her things inside
All except for Cain and Abel
And the hunchback of Notre Dame
Everybody's making love or else expecting rain
And the good Samaritan, he's dressing
He's getting ready for the show

He's going to the carnival tonight on Desolation Row

Ophelia, she's 'neath the window
For her I feel so afraid
On her 22nd birthday
She already is an old maid
To her, death is quite romantic
She wears an ironed vest
Her profession's her religion
Her sin is her lifelessness
And though her eyes are fixed upon Noah's great rainbow

She spends her time peeking into Desolation Row

Einstein disguised as Robin Hood
With his memories in a trunk
Passed this way an hour ago
With his friend, a jealous monk
Now, he looked so immaculately frightful
As he bummed a cigarette
Then he went off sniffing drainpipes

Desolation Row (continued)

And reciting the alphabet
You would not think to look at him
But he was famous long ago

For playing the electric violin on Desolation Row

Dr. Filth, he keeps his world
Inside of a leather cup
But all his sexless patients
They are trying to blow it up
Now, his nurse, some local loser
She's in charge of the cyanide hole
And she also keeps the cards that read
"Have mercy on his soul"
They all play on the penny whistle, you can hear them blow

If you lean your head out far enough from Desolation Row

Across the street they've nailed the curtains
They're getting ready for the feast
The Phantom of the Opera

In a perfect image of a priest
They are spoon-feeding Casanova
To get him to feel more assured
Then they'll kill him with self-confidence
After poisoning him with words
And the phantom shouting to skinny girls

"Get out of here if you don't know"

Casanova is just being punished for going to Desolation Row

At midnight, all the agents
And the superhuman crew
Come out and round up everyone
That knows more than they do
And they bring them to the factory
Where their heart attack machine
Is strapped across their shoulders
And then the kerosene
Is brought down from the castles by insurance men who go
Check to see that nobody is escaping to Desolation Row

Praise be to Nero's Neptune
The Titanic sails at dawn
Everybody's shouting
"Which side are you on?"
And Ezra Pound and T.S. Elliot
Fighting in the captain's tower
While calypso singers laugh at them
And fishermen hold flowers
Between the windows of the sea where lovely mermaids flow
And nobody has to think too much about

Desolation Row (continued)

Desolation Row

Yes, I received your letter yesterday
About the time the doorknob broke
When you asked me how I was doing
Was that some kind of joke?
All these people that you mentioned
Yes, I know them, they are quite lame
I had to rearrange their faces
And give them all another name
Right now I can't read too good, don't send me no more letters, no

Not unless you mail them from Desolation Row

Joe Hill

"Joe Hill", also known as "I Dreamed I Saw Joe Hill Last Night", is a folk song named after labor activist Joe Hill, which was originally written in poem by Alfred Hayes and composed into music by Earl Robinson in 1936. (Wikipedia)

EXTRA NON-DYLAN SONG

I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night,
alive as you and me.
Says I "But Joe, you're ten years dead"
"I never died" said he,
"I never died" said he.

"The Copper Bosses killed you Joe,
they shot you Joe" says I.
"Takes more than guns to kill a man"
Says Joe "I didn't die"
Says Joe "I didn't die"

"In Salt Lake City, Joe," says I,
Him standing by my bed,
"They framed you on a murder charge,"
Says Joe, "But I ain't dead,"
Says Joe, "But I ain't dead."

And standing there as big as life
and smiling with his eyes.
Says Joe "What they can never kill
went on to organize,
went on to organize"

From San Diego up to Maine,
in every mine and mill,
Where working men defend their rights,
it's there you find Joe Hill,
it's there you find Joe Hill!

I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night,
alive as you and me.
Says I "But Joe, you're ten years dead"
"I never died" said he,
"I never died" said he.

Lyrics provided by Musixmatch which Spotify uses:
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